

JULIA LISELLA

## Going Lightly Slowly

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Whatever my father ever asked for  
was slight and not even  
that he be remembered, but that the sound of the wheels  
moved evenly, the toasting of the bread,  
the scrambling of the eggs,  
the frying of the bacon,  
he taught me to do all slowly carefully  
to avoid the pain that could come might come  
of crashing, burning, curling

My children are always sleeping when I cry  
I kiss them slowly  
I spend a kiss on the cheek or forehead  
and my stray hair tickles an eyelid.  
They snore. And as they sleep  
I steal the minute out of their lives  
when they did not even consider loving me.  
The first one  
bangs an arm against the headboard, cheap wrought iron,  
phony imitation clang clang. The second  
sweaty at the ears and hair in a flange across  
the pillowcase might move but not wake.  
The husband wakes with a kiss  
so I must not kiss.

How beautiful their bare hands in the air!

Yes, yes, father, I remember.

Not *can I? can I?*

but may I may I may I